Trinity Parsonage, Richmond, VA. March 31. Fri. 1865

My penchant for writing is perhaps a whit less extravagant than when this book was a daily companion in the pleasant days of my pedagogue-hood. Four years have dealt us many sad blows. Before the war was actually begun too many looked upon the prospect of that event with little horror, & perhaps with complacency, if not in fact with some degree of pleasure. So little did we know of what difficulties were in store for us. Many who were most ardent for war have become quiet, or their voices are heard only in complaint and despondency. And many who regretted deeply the dire necessity are manfully struggling for their country. It is a dark day with us. Gloominess prevails everywhere in city, & country. Our armies have lost battles, & the Enemy makes deserts of our fair land. Many talk as if the day of their subjugation was at hand, & that man could not, & God would not avert the calamity. Thus they talk, forgetting that we still have large armies in the field, & that the enemy has large difficulties in the way of their success they seem to think that we only have difficulties. More convince am I than ever of the absolute necessity of our success, or our degradation into the most abject slavery. That no tyranny wd [would] be more harsh than that under which we wd [would] have to live were we overcome.

I shudder to think of such a result, and when I reflect that can we but maintain ourselves, for a few more months that our victory will be recorded. When I know how difficult and almost impossible it is for the Yankees to fill up the great gaps in their armies, & the inefficiency of their present force to overcome, I am appalled that a Southern man should think of aught else than to fight. I thank God that my determination has not been lessed in all these four years of battling – that wound, nor sickness, nor hunger, nor prison has lessed my ardor in the righteous cause of Virginia and the South.